

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T MOSCOW 8710

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, XO, UR, OTRA
SUBJECT: INDIAN OCEAN WORKING GROUP MEETING IN MOSCOW

REF: STATE 138597

SUMMARY: THE SOVIET APPROACH TO THE INITIAL TALKS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN WILL BE TO LISTEN TO OUR IDEAS AND TO REPEAT THEIR KNOWN POSITION. THEY CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL FOR A WORKING GROUP ON THIS SUBJECT TO BE OUR IDEA AND THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO TAKE ANY SPECIFIC INITIATIVES, AT LEAST IN THE FIRST ROUND OF TALKS. IN RESTATING THEIR POSITION, ESPECIALLY ON DIEGO GARCIA, THEY WILL REMAIN SKEPTICAL OF U.S. INTENTIONS. THE U.S. APPROACH, IN OUR VIEW, SHOULD FOLLOW THE LINES OF REFTEL AND SHOULD IN PARTICULAR FOCUS ON DEFINING THE SCOPE OF A POSSIBLE AGREEMENT AND ON QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION. WE WOULD NOT EXPECT AGREEMENT ON WHAT CONSTITUTES A "BASE" BUT WE MAY BE ABLE TO REACH SOME UNDERSTANDING ON DEFINITIONS OF "PRESENCE," NAVAL FORCES, GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITS, DEPLOYMENTS, SHIP-DAYS, ETC. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE INDIAN OCEAN IN CONNECTION WITH THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO MOSCOW IN MARCH, THE SOVIETS HAVE PUT FORTH
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NO NEW IDEAS OF THEIR OWN; RATHER THEY HAVE BEEN CONTENT TO REPEAT THEIR KNOWN POSITION WITHOUT CLARIFYING ANY OF ITS AMBIGUITIES OR VAGUENESS. THEY HAVE SOUGHT INSTEAD TO DRAW OUT U.S. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ISSUES. IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE WORKING GROUP, SCHEDULED TO BEGIN ON JUNE 22, THE SOVIET APPROACH WILL BE TO LISTEN AND TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OF U.S. ATTITUDES.

IN RESTATING THEIR POSITION, THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO PUT FORTH NEW IDEAS OR TO GIVE DEFINITIVE RESPONSES TO U.S. THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS. THE SOVIETS WILL INSIST THAT DIEGO GARCIA IS THE CENTRAL ISSUE AND THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DISCUSS ARMS LIMITATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WITHOUT AGREEMENT TO DISMANTLE THE BASE AND TO FORSWEAR ANY OTHER BASE CONSTRUCTION. THEY WILL INSIST THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS NO BASES IN THE AREA AND THAT NEITHER BERBERA NOR ANY OTHER FACILITY IS A MILITARY BASE UNDER THE TERMS OF THE DISCUSSION. ON BOTH OF THESE MATTERS WE EXPECT THEM TO BE UNYIELDING IN THIS FIRST ROUND OF TALKS.

2. WE CAN EXPECT HARD BARGAINING FROM THE SOVIETS IN THESE TALKS SINCE THEIR OBJECTIVES WILL BE TO CLOSE OUT DIEGO GARCIA AND REDUCE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AT MINIMAL COST TO SOVIET "BASES" AND PRESENCE. IN FACT, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL SIMPLY STONEWALL DURING THIS ROUND, DENOUNCING DIEGO GARCIA AND EXPRESSING DOUBTS ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF OUR APPROACH. ON THE QUESTION OF DEPLOYMENTS AND SHIP-DAYS, HOWEVER, THERE IS SOME CHANCE THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE WILLING TO TALK SERIOUSLY, SINCE IT IS NOT A QUESTION WHICH CARRIES THE POTENTIALLY DAMAGING IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR POSITION THAT "BASES" DO. IT MAY ALSO BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE SOME USEFUL EXCHANGES ON THE QUESTIONS OF THE SCOPE OF THE DISCUSSION AND THE TYPES OF FORCES TO BE COVERED. IN OUR VIEW, HOWEVER, THE CENTRAL ISSUES ARE LIKELY TO REQUIRE FURTHER BILATERAL
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DISCUSSIONS IN SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS.

3. IN VIEW OF THIS LIKELY SOVIET APPROACH, WE BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. SHOULD SEEK THREE OBJECTIVES:

-- FIRST, TO REITERATE THAT WE ARE GENUINELY COMMITTED, AS THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID REPEATEDLY, TO MUTUAL ARMS REDUCTIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

-- SECONDLY, TO CONCENTRATE ON DEFINING THE MAIN ISSUES.

-- THIRDLY, TO BUILD FROM THE MINIMUM LEVEL OF AGREED DEFINITIONS, TO OUTLINE THOSE AREAS WHERE AGREEMENT MAY BE POSSIBLE, AND TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR CONTINUING THE DISCUSSIONS.
TOON

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